

THE GUADAGNI AND THE MARQUISATE OF SAN LEOLINO DEL CONTE

MARQUIS OF SAN LEOLINO DEL CONTE

The Guadagni are Marquis of San Leolino del Conte. It all started with Ortensia Guadagni (died on 4/12/1659). She was the daughter of Francesco Guadagni (1534-1611) and his second wife Laura Bandini (b. 1569) .

In 1602, Ortensia married Filippo, son of Averardo Salviati, nephew of Pope Leo XI. In 1614 she was left a widow. In 1634 she was appointed main chambermaid (i.e. lady-in-waiting) of Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany. She had supervised Vittoria's education when the latter was a child. Her service was so dear to the Grand Dukes that, despite the fact she was a woman, she was assigned the Marquisate of San Leolino del Conte, with its town and parish, and the parishes of Sambucheta, Vierle, Bucigna and Varena. It extended over an area with a circumference of eight miles, containing a total of 300 houses and 1,272 inhabitants. Ortensia had the duty of maintaining an army of 69 men, at the service of the Grand Duke.

On February 21, 1652, Ortensia obtained another favor from the Grand Duke. A certificate granted that, at her death, the marquisate would pass to her brother Tommaso, a senator, and then to his first born descendants. She died on April 12. 1659.

So Ortensia Guadagni Salviati was the first Marchese of San Leolino del Conte. It is very rare, in reality I do not know of anybody else, when a title of nobility is given to a woman as first original beneficiary of it. When Ortensia died however, in 1659, her brother Tommaso had passed away 7 years earlier, on March 3, 1652. So his oldest son, Francesco (1627-1696) became the second marquis of San Leolino del Conte (often abbreviated in San Leolino).

Francesco obtained from the Grand Duke that at his death the title of Marquis of San Leolino would be inherited by his younger brother Donato Maria (1641-1718) skipping his brother Pierantonio (1629-1709). Pierantonio Guadagni was upset by it. So he bought another Marquisate for himself and his descendants, the Marquisate of Montepescali. We will study it in another file, called the Marquisate of Montepescali.

So Donato Maria became the third Marquis of San Leolino. At his death in 1718, his oldest surviving son. Neri Andrea (the one who carried Saint Faustina's body from Rome to the Guadagni Chapel in Florence), became the fourth Marquis of San Leolino.

When Neri Andrea dies, in 1748, his only son, Donato (1719-1797), becomes the fifth Marquis of San Leolino.

At Donato's death, 2 of his 4 sons are still living, both married with children, Tommaso (1743-1814) and Luigi (1751-1799). His other 2 sons, Bernardo and Neri died earlier, unmarried and without children. Tommaso, the oldest, becomes the 6th Marquis of San Leolino. At Donato's death, the huge Guadagni patrimony is equally divided between Tommaso and Luigi (who is our ancestor). In his memoirs, great-uncle Giacomo, Adriano's father, recalls jokingly how the paintings of the famous Guadagni Art Gallery, the most important and largest private art collection in Florence, second only to the Grand Dukes', were divided by incompetent administrators according to the size of the painting, ignorant of their value.

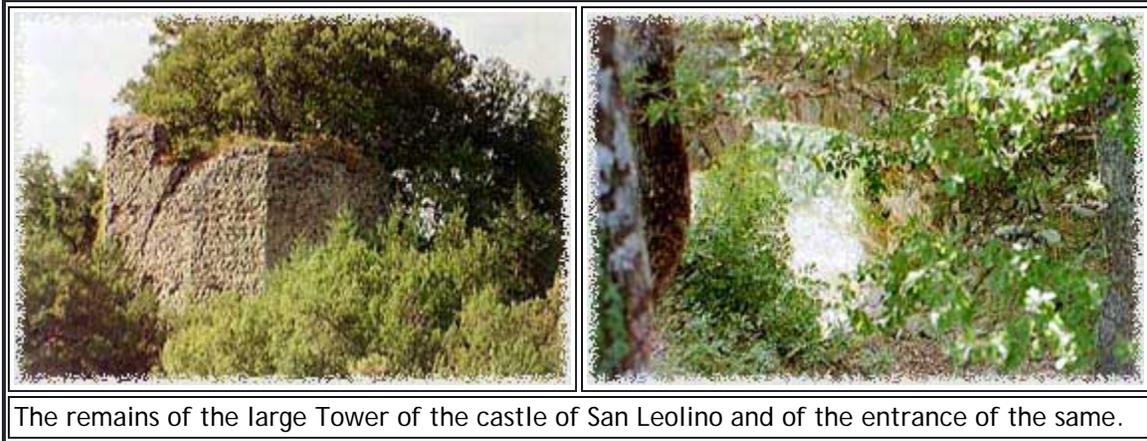
As the eldest, Tommaso also inherits the Guadagni Palace of Santo Spirito and the estate of San Leolino del Conte. Tommaso has only one son, Neri (1790-1862) who becomes 7th Marquis of San Leolino, at his father's death in 1814. Luigi also has only one son, Donato (1794-1879). Donato loses his father when he is only five years old. Through inexperience and carelessness, he dilapidates his large patrimony during his long life.

Neri has only one daughter, Ottavia (b. 1817), who marries Marquis Knight Commander Odoardo Massimiliano Dufour-Berte on October 5th, 1837. Ottavia and Massimiliano have children and descendants. However, the title of Marquis of San Leolino del Conte goes to the closest Guadagni male relative, her cousin Donato, who becomes the 8th Marquis of San Leolino. His son Guadagno will become the 9th Marquis of San Leolino, and the marquise will continue through the eldest descendants of Guadagno Guadagni's branch of the family, the only remaining branch of the Guadagni, who however will be very prolific.

The estate of San Leolino del Conte remains however with the Dufour Berte. So, the Guadagni will be the Marquis of San Leolino, but without the Guadagni Palace of Santo Spirito or the Estate of San Leolino del Conte, both inherited by the Dufour Berte, who still own their part of the Guadagni fortune.

How to get to San Leolino from Florence: by car: go through State Road N 67, in direction of Pontassieve, and then Rufina. When you get to Contea, take the deviation to Londa. In Londa, pass through the bridge, turn on the left following the indications of Vierle. After almost 2 miles, at the junction for Vierle-San Leolino, follow the indications for Parish and Castle of San Leolino. After about 2/3 of a mile turn on the left on an uneven road following the indication San Leolino. It should take less than an hour from Florence.

Castle of S.Leolino del Conte



The remains of the castle of San Leolino are situated in the district of Londa next to the old road which connects the valley of the Mosca River to the region of the Casentino through the Consuma Pass. The castle dominates the countryside next to the town of Vierle.

» [Guarda una vecchia foto del castello](#)

If you press the sentence above, meaning "look at an old photo of the castle", you will see an old picture of the castle of San Leolino before WWII, during which it was further damaged by bombings.

The castle of San Leolino rises on a 600 meter high hill along the road connecting Londa and the town of Vierle in the valley of the Moscia Creek. During the Middle-Ages the Counts Guidi of Battifolle owned the whole region. They erected several fortifications to be able to dominate the important road leading to the Casentino district.

Of all these castles, San Leolino still shows the most important remains. The other castles have either completely disappeared or have been transformed in villas with no signs of their ancient fortifications. The presence of the San Leolino fortress is already mentioned in the year 1100. Its importance is proven by the fact that it gave its name to the surrounding county. In 1367, the Republic of Florence gave the Castle of San Leolino to Count Guido, son of Count Ugo of Battifolle.



The remains of the walls of the castle.



Walls of the castle in the midst of growing vegetation.

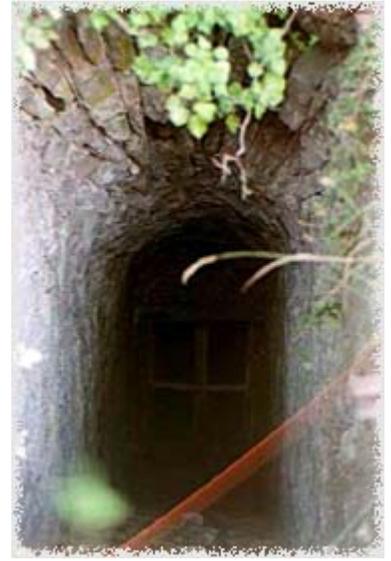
When Count Guido rebelled against Florence, Florence took over control of the castle of San Leolino and gave it to the Parsonage of Poppi. Fearing a victorious return of the defeated Counts, the Republic of Florence decided to destroy the most important castles of the area, San Leolino and Vicorati, in 1375. They were never restored to military usage.

The situation of the castle of San Leolino did not change until the middle of the 17th century when the Grand Duke of Tuscany gave it and the surrounding area to Ortensia Guadagni as a Marquisate. To administer her Marquisate, Ortensia had a palace built in the neighborhood of the half-destroyed old castle. The succeeding

Guadagni Dufour-Berte owners transformed the palace in a villa. The ruins of the castle are really striking and give a good idea of its past powerful strength. The powerful tower in the shape of a polygon with smoothed corners is breath-taking. It still rises among the scarce remnants of the surrounding walls, as one of the tallest and rare examples of that type of Middle-Ages fortification.

The local underground vaults of the castle have been inundated by water filtered through an aquifer, creating an underground lake that increases the distinctive traits of the place. A legend says that from the underground vaults of the castle a small passage dug in the rocks connects San Leolino with all the neighboring castles and fortresses of the area or their ruins.

The castle is part of the property of the neighboring abovementioned villa and is enclosed by a fence. The only way to visit the spellbinding ruins is to convince the local peasant who guards the land to let you in and wander about.



The entrance to the underground vaults and lake.